

The DDS Messenger



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Employee Newsletter of the D.C. Department on Disability Services

Message from the Director



Over the past several weeks, the Department on Disability Services has won praise from the Mayor, the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), advocates and, most importantly, those that we serve.

In a March 9 letter from CMS, we were informed that the District had successfully completed the Corrective Action Plan (CAP) for the Home and Community Based Services Waiver for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In releasing the District from intensified monitoring, the CMS praised the

progress we have made on several key fronts. The CMS letter notes that:

“After intensive monitoring and technical assistance over the past year and much deliberation and hard work on your part, we believe that the District has made major changes in the performance, structure, oversight and systems in the DD HCBS waiver program sufficient enough to engage in continuous Quality Improvement (QI) . We find the new systems that the District has implemented appear to have the capacity for the District’s Department on Disability Services and Department of Health Care Finance to engage in and

realize continuous and effective evidence based QI processes.”

However, while it is always great to hear others acknowledge your progress, the most important salute is from those who receive our services and who have praised the person-centered and greater choice model we now make available to them. You will read more comments in articles in this newsletter that note the efforts of our hard working staff.

The Developmental Disabilities Administration’s service coordinators and the Rehabilitation Services Administration’s rehabilitation counselors are where the rubber hits the road. I want to add my voice to those who have expressed their appreciation for your work.

You are the backbone of this agency and its heart and soul as well. The willingness that many of you demonstrate to go the extra mile is generating greater choice and improved lives for the District residents we serve. Thank you.

- Judith Heumann

DDS Progress Noted by Mayor, AG at Press Conference

Mayor Adrian M. Fenty and Attorney General Peter J. Nickles joined Department on Disability Services Director Judith Heumann for a press conference on March 6, 2009 to note “substantial progress” at the Department.



Mayor Adrian Fenty congratulates DDS.

“The Department on Disability Services is winning widespread praise for its marked improvements to services for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities,” said Mayor Fenty. “The District has moved aggressively to ensure a better quality of life for our most vulnerable residents.”



Peter Nickles, D.C. Attorney General.

“It is clear that DDS is making a positive and powerful impact on the lives of the people with disabilities that it serves and

earning the trust of all who care about them,” Attorney General Peter Nickles said.



**DDS Director Judith Heumann
Speaks as Mayor applauds.**

“As we have built our team and undertaken reforms, national and local organizations have noticed our progress. There is still more work to be done, but we now have great momentum,” said DDS Director Judith Heumann.

The Mayor offered an update on the progress that the DDA is making in supporting more individuals to live with their families or in other small homes and apartments.

“At the end of FY08, 1,234 District residents were enrolled in the DD waiver program. Today 1,293 District residents are enrolled in the waiver, with 510 individuals living with family members and receiving in-home supports. In total, 62% of all residential services are delivered through the DD waiver.”

Mayor Fenty also highlighted the critical work that the expanded health care initiative partnership with George Washington University (GWU) and Georgetown University (GU) is doing to improve health services.

GWU conducts monthly Advisory Board meetings that bring together medical and health policy experts to discuss options and solutions on how to best serve individuals in the areas of health policy, education, finance, credentialing and legislation.

DDS has further strengthened the DC Health Resource Partnership (DCHRP), which began in 2006 as a collaborative dedicated to improving access and delivery of health care for District residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The team works closely with providers to improve quality of care and consists of a Medical Director, a psychiatrist, several nurses, an occupational therapist, physical therapist, speech pathologist and behavioral psychologist. This team augments DDA’s Health and Wellness Unit and dramatically increases the capacity of DDS to provide intensive clinical support and oversight.

For more information, visit the DDS website at www.dds.dc.gov.

DDS Reports Progress During Council Oversight Hearings

District Councilmember Tommy Wells (D-6), Chairman of the Human Services Committee, held performance oversight hearings February 19, 2009, on the Department on Disability Services.

Representatives of the community who testified were optimistic about the progress being made by the agency. Councilmember Wells expressed some concerns, but agreed that the agency appears to be headed in the right direction.

In her testimony, Director Heumann cited the following key improvements in services.

“Last year at this time, I reported to you that in FY 2007, we assisted over 60 persons to move into homes or apartments of their own choosing through our then recently expanded Medicaid waiver program,” she said. “Today, I am happy to report that at the end of FY 2008, 1,234 District residents were enrolled in the waiver program. This included over 230 residents who were newly enrolled

during FY 2008, a 23% increase in overall enrollment.

“We are moving aggressively to make up for lost time,” she noted. “Today, nearly two-thirds – 64 percent – of those served receive home and community based services through the waiver.”

Director Heumann also cited significant accomplishments by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).

“On September 30, 2008, Individualized Plans for Employment (IPE) were fully implemented for 396 individuals who were job ready and seeking employment and of this number, roughly one-fifth have found a job,” she said.

The director also cited significant strides in the RSA Transition Services program that assists students with disabilities in the D.C. Public Schools to transition from secondary school to the VR program. In FY 2008, DDS/RSA received 820 referrals of students with disabilities. Of this, 40 percent of the students are now receiving transition services and the rest are receiving vocational rehabilitation services.

Director Heumann said there are still several issues to be addressed

to continue to improve services to individuals with disabilities. “We have not achieved all of our objectives but we continue to make significant progress toward doing so,” she said.

Community Witnesses

Tina Campanella, Executive Director of Quality Trust, said significant progress is being made by DDS. “Some very important progress has been made to craft and refine administrative systems and structures needed for more proactive and functional operations,” she said. Campanella also praised the work of service coordinators, saying they “are more present in people’s lives and are getting better at tracking issues with service delivery” And called for “more urgency in action to find resolution.”

Rachel Burton, Policy Specialist for The ARC of DC, complimented RSA’s efforts to improve its transition services to ensure that students in DC Public Schools would have a seamless movement into RSA services. She said she was pleased the city had allocated funds for the RSA transition program. “It is vital that RSA meet students where they are in the school environment,” Burton said. “RSA is beginning to bring on program staff to help with

transition.... (and) we are excited about the new leadership.”

Project ACTION

Ricardo Thornton, a former resident of Forest Haven and a Vice Chairman of Project ACTION, noted that he felt DDA service coordination had made improvements over the last year. He also stressed the needs for changes in the monitoring system, which is conducted by several different agencies, including DDA, University Legal Services, Quality Trust, the Evans court monitor and others. “We have too many monitors popping up,” Thornton said. “They need to respect our time and set up times around our schedules. People with disabilities are the best persons to say what is going on in our lives, and we need to be more involved in the process.”

Germaine Payne, another Vice Chairman of Project Action, testified that improvements have been made in DDA service coordination. “Case management has gotten better, people are having a better experience with their case managers, and there have been fewer turnovers. This is very important to us because it is important to have good case managers who know their jobs and get to know us.”

Additional Witnesses

Mary Lou Meccariello, Executive Director of The ARC of DC, was invited to the witness table. She said she supports the direction DDS is going.

“I hope that DDS will become the future model services (agency) for the city,” she said. “There has been progress through strategic thinking, creative partnerships, and the Medicaid waiver that provides greater choice. The new leadership has given way to increased intensity to create change and to institute the waiver services; it is not there yet, but it’s the hope for the future for the city,” she said.

Arthur Ginsberg of the D.C. Coalition of Providers likewise applauded the efforts and progress of DDS.

He expressed satisfaction with the rates paid to providers. “The waiver reimbursements are adequate,” he said. “The rates for the ICFs had the first rate increase in six fiscal years, with an increase of 19.2 percent a year ago, and another 3.9 percent increase retroactive to October of 2008.

“We welcome the strategy that DDA has embraced in Money Follows the Person, moving people

into less restrictive settings,” Ginsberg said. He noted that many providers face difficulty locating affordable and accessible housing for the individuals they support.

Life Choice Planners

*By Phyllis Holton,
Quality Trust for Individuals with
Disabilities*

Life Choice Planners of Washington, D.C., coordinated by Quality Trust for Individuals with Disabilities, is an innovative collaboration between self-advocates, family members, the D.C. Department on Disability Services’ Developmental Disabilities Administration, and District service providers.

The goal is to create person-centered life choice plans to ensure self-determination and planning for one’s life.... from beginning to end. Life choice planning is vital for everyone, and should start when a person is healthy and able to participate and lead the planning process as much as possible. It’s not just about being ill and needing decisions to be made, but about doing the planning in a pro-active manner so a plan is available when someone is sick and questions need to be answered.

This effort began in the District in 2005 with a pilot group including two self-advocates, three service coordinators, four advocates, training specialists and residential managers participating. The group made a commitment to meet each month to learn the planning process, do planning with individuals, assist in editing a manual that would guide future participants in the Life Choice Planning process, and agree to be the pioneers in this process in the District.

In the second year of the project, a service coordinator, community outreach specialist, two parents, advocates, and program and residential support professionals participated in the process using the draft manual as a guide to develop life choice plans for 15 persons with disabilities in the District.

During the process, people with disabilities join the group and start a planning session facilitated by Leigh Ann Kingsbury, a disability and gerontologist consultant to the project. The participants get to see how the meeting is done, develop a comfort level, and see the emotions that can surface during the question sessions that many of the people supported have never been asked before.

First-year participants elected to be trainers for the upcoming groups and/or coaches to new life choice planners. Sabine Campbell, DDA Training Specialist, is a trainer of the process and also served as a coach for Michelle Hawkins, DDA Community Outreach Specialist. Sabine said, “I found the process to be very empowering and it allowed me to support someone to truly plan in a person-centered way for their future.”

Tanya Snowden, DDA Service Coordinator, said, “I thought the program was great and should be incorporated for every person we support, it taught me a lot about being aware of the end of life issues and the planning it takes and how important it is. I really enjoyed the process. It even helped me build on the relationship I had with the individuals and I learned many things I didn’t know about them.”

The manual, People Planning Ahead, written by author Leigh Ann Kingsbury, has been published by the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) and is available for purchase through AAIDD www.aaid.org.

Life Choice planning training is available through Quality Trust

and the DDS Developmental Disabilities Administration for service provider staff, DDA staff, families and other interested parties. The training is recommended to ensure users have the foundation to successfully plan for individuals and that the philosophy and intent is understood. For more information, contact Phyllis Holton at pholton@dcqualitytrust.org, Janice Armstrong at janice.armstrong@dc.gov or Sabine Campbell at sabine.campbell@dc.gov.

2009 Disability Policy Summit to be Held in Washington, D.C.

The Arc of the United States and other disability organizations are joining forces to sponsor the 2009 Disability Policy Summit, “A New Era: Emerging in the Face of Grave Challenges” on April 27-29 at the Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill, 400 New Jersey Ave, NE in Washington D.C.

Speakers and sessions will explore issues around the economic recession that has left most states facing severe shortfalls in their budgets. The shrinking budgets are cutting many vital services and supports for people with

disabilities. The Summit will explore effective strategies to obtain bipartisan support for high priority disability issues.

Discussions will include budget and appropriations, entitlements (Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security), health care and long term services reform, the Developmental Disabilities Act and employment. Representatives will deliver a unified message to Congress and the Obama Administration that disability benefits and services are top priorities.

Other sponsors of the event include the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, the Association of University Centers on Disabilities, United Cerebral Palsy and the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities and Self Advocates Becoming Empowered.

For more information or to register, visit the website of The Arc of the United States at www.thearc.org.

Metro Offers Reduced Fare SmarTrip® Card Exchange

If you are a person with a disability or a senior citizen using a regular SmarTrip® card, you could save 50% on your bus and rail fares with a Senior SmarTrip® card or a Reduced Fare SmarTrip® card.

Exchange your regular SmarTrip® card for a Senior SmarTrip® card or a Reduced Fare SmarTrip® card for FREE.

DATES:	Wednesday, April 15
	Wednesday, April 22
TIME:	10 am – 3 pm
PLACE:	Metro Headquarters 600 Fifth Street, NW Washington, DC 20001

Please bring photo identification (i.e., valid Metro Disability ID Card, completed application for the Reduced Fare Program for People with Disabilities, and/or proof of age 65 or older).

These events are being held for the sole purpose of exchanging an

undamaged, regular SmarTrip® card for a Senior SmarTrip® card or a Reduced Fare SmarTrip® card. For any other concerns or questions about SmarTrip®, please call 1-888-SMARTRIP (TTY 703-620-8782) or visit MetroOpensDoors.com.



The Special Olympics has undertaken a campaign calling for a national day of awareness for America to “Spread the Word to End the Word.” The word to be ended is the “R-word” typically used to describe people with or perceived to have intellectual disabilities.

Most people don’t think of this word as hate speech, but that’s exactly what it feels like to millions of people with intellectual disabilities, their families and friends, according to a Special Olympics release.

“Spread the Word to End the Word” is designed to raise the consciousness of society about the dehumanizing and hurtful effects of the R-word and encourage people to pledge to stop using it. All are asked to declare their support for more respectful and

inclusive language, specifically that referring to those with intellectual disabilities.

Created by young people with and without intellectual disabilities, the campaign is one element of Special Olympics' vision of a world where everyone matters, where everyone is accepted and, most importantly, where everyone is valued.

On March 31, young people across the country led local efforts to raise awareness and collect pledges on www.r-word.org from peers and the community to vow not to use the R-word. Actor and activist John C. McGinley, of the hit show "Scrubs," is helping with this effort by making national media appearances on behalf of the campaign.

For tips on how you can help "spread the word," visit the Special Olympics Inc. at | www.specialolympics.org . |



Model Asperger Program Announces Lecture Series

The Model Asperger Program at the Ivymount School has announced its spring 2009 Lecture Series open to all parents, professionals and caregivers.

All sessions are held 7-9 p.m., beginning March 31, 2009, at Ivymount School, 11614 Seven Locks Rd., Rockville, MD. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. for networking and refreshments. An RSVP is requested, but no one will be turned away. All sessions are free.

The lecture series dates, topics and speakers are as follows.

- Wednesday, April 28, 2009:
"The Management of Anxiety in Schools and Families: Implications from Anxiety Treatment Studies," John T. Walkup, M.D., Deputy Director, Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions.
- Thursday, May 28, 2009:
"Supporting the Child with Challenging Mood and Behavior: Lessons from

Dialectical Behavior Therapy, Sensory Integration Therapy and Dynamic Relationship-Based Therapy,” Georgia DeGangi, Ph.D., OTR, FAOTA, author, clinical psychologist and an occupational therapist in private practice at ITS (Integrated Therapy Services).

Parent volunteers will provide transportation to and from the Red Line Metro at Friendship Heights if requested in advance. CEU credits are available.

To register, and for more information about the Model Asperger Program, interested persons may call (301) 469-0223, or visit www.ivymount.org. Go to the Model Asperger Program section and click on Lectures, or go directly to <http://www.ivymount.org/forms.cfm?myForm=10>.

DDS, ODEP Partner on Customized Employment

The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) at the U.S. Department of Labor is partnering with the D.C. Department on Disability Services (DDS) to create a Community of

Excellence in Customized Employment that increases employment outcomes for people with disabilities and others who face barriers to employment in the District of Columbia.

Through training and technical assistance, DDS staff and community organizations that serve people with disabilities will learn Customized Employment strategies to enable people who may previously have been considered unemployable to find and retain jobs. Customized employment is not a program, but is a flexible process designed to personalize the employment relationship between a job candidate and an employer in a way that meets the needs of both.

Customized Employment utilizes an individualized approach to employment planning and job development – one person at a time and one employer at a time. This initiative is particularly timely, in that it can address the needs of employers who are faced with having to rethink their workforces while still meeting their business goals.

Customized Employment focuses on increasing employment options for job seekers with complex needs, including significant disabilities. Through this targeted

Community of Excellence project, ODEP and DDS seek to establish the District of Columbia as a national model for the employment of persons with significant disabilities and other barriers to employment.

This training, facilitated by ODEP contractors Economic Systems and ICF International, will feature national experts, including Michael Callahan from Marc Gold & Associates/Employment for All. They will provide 4 training sessions along with conference calls and direct technical assistance in the coming months for DDS staff, other DC-based public and private agencies, community service providers, and employers.

The first training session was attended by staff from DDA, RSA, DMH, St. John's Community Services, Kennedy Institute, National Children's Center, Goodwill Industries, Psychiatric Center Chartered, and St. Coletta's.

At the first session, held on February 26 and 27, DDS Director Judith Heumann called on participants to be creative and aggressive in seeking more employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. "We are not yet where we want to be; we

need to be supporting more people to get into good jobs," she said. "Everybody should start thinking outside of the box."

Callahan said the goal of customized employment is to ensure an appropriate match between employee and employer. "Customized employment means individualizing the employment relationship between employees and employers in ways that meet the needs of both," he said. "It is based on an individualized determination of the strengths, needs and interests of the person with a disability and is also designed to meet the specific needs of the employer."

He said that a key part of the CE process is "discovery."

"Discovery examines already-existing information about a person, and identifies a direction for employment based on information obtained from the person's entire life and not from an instance of performance," he said. "Through discovery, we can identify the unique contribution a person can make to meet an identified employer need."

Edmund Neboh, RSA Supported Employment coordinator, was excited about the involvement of so many providers who would be able to use customized

employment to engage corporations and businesses in customizing jobs for the individuals they serve.

Other DDS participants included Drew Franklin, RSA acting supervisor of the Social Security unit; Mary Koehler, RSA marketing placement specialist; Michelle Hawkins, DDA Community Outreach Specialist; Linda Landers, DDS Project Manager; Anissa Amegbe, DDA Service Coordinator; and Tracy Taylor, DDA Planning and Resource Specialist.



Welcome Aboard to New Staff!

Stephen Lewis- Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist

Kimberly James – Quality Improvement Specialist
Edna Johnson- Supervisory Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist
Derek Sharp- Supervisory IT Specialist
Pamikka Garner- Program Support Assistant
Ijeoma Oji (IJ) - DDA Service Coordination Division Director
Altamit Lewis – Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist
Tamara Smith- Service Coordinator
Germesa Ellis- Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist
Bianca Roberts- Social Insurance Specialist
Nicole Appleman- Social Insurance Specialist
Kym Thornton- Social Insurance Specialist
Irmgard Richardson – Service Coordinator
Donald Burch _ Service Coordinator

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